Thompson: Let's just jump right into [it]. Could you start when softball became the sport you did versus the others? You were talking about soccer and then softball, and how you had to choose one. You made a cute joke about your mom.

Johnson: The joke's gone! Well, I grew up...I was born in Maryland until I was six and then we moved to Alabama. I didn't do softball back then in Maryland or anything. But my brothers did T Ball and stuff and we teased my little brother for just playing in the dirt because he was three. But then we moved to Alabama and my older brother was playing baseball and I would go to his baseball practices and tournaments and stuff. And, in the backyard he would—he wasn't even a pitcher—but he knew pitching stuff and he'd teach me how to pitch baseball-style. We'd have signs and everything. My two brothers played baseball in the backyard and stuff like that, and then when I was nine, my mom was like, "oh I have a surprise!" Took me to a softball field, but *I* did not know that softball existed. I thought there was only baseball, so I was quite disappointed because I was like, "this isn't the baseball park!" I knew where the baseball park was and we passed it. And I was like, "why is the ball bigger?" I was not vibing, but I was like, "I'm so excited!" When I was twelve, that's when I began playing more competitive softball. I had done the All-Stars at the rec for 10U and 12U, and then I started playing competitive travel...maybe 12U, 14U.

Thompson: That's awesome. And it seems that you've been able to have be exposed to a lot of different communities, not just groups of people...but soccer, softball, moving from one state to another. I'm curious to know when the first time you experienced or witnessed the intersection of sports and race, race meaning racial identity.

Johnson: I don't know about anything that I was cognizant about. I would say that the first time there was something that was apparent...even my parents. The thing is my parents—I wouldn't even say interfered—they were being parents in a lot of spaces that I don't even know about when I was younger. There would be instances where I was at school where I wasn't put in enrichment programs, but my parents went to the school and was like, "this isn't fair. She has the grades." And then I was put into it. I didn't learn about that until high school and stuff, so when I was in third grade, "oh now I'm in the enrichment program," when I wasn't before. I didn't think much about it. But I know for softball in high school, we had a freshmen team, JV team and varsity. I was on [the] freshmen team freshman year and I was on JV my second year. Freshman year, I had received the number one batting average and stuff like that. I was playing JV at the end of freshman year, just running bases and stuff. But then my sophomore year, I think it was like the first fourteen games, I didn't play a game. After the first seven or eight, I went to my coach asking what could I do better to play? He said, "oh, when this girl messes up,"—and this happened to be the only Black girl who was actively playing. We had three Black people on the

team total. Me and the other one were sitting on the bench and the other one was playing. He said, “when she messes up, that’s when you get to play.” Me and the girl didn’t even play the same position, so if she can’t play her position I can’t fill in. She was a pitcher and I am an outfielder. That doesn’t make any sense. I told my parents, and I didn’t even know until this year that my parents went to the head coach and stuff and was like, “That’s racist. Your assistant coach told my daughter that she can only play when the other Black girl messes up. That doesn’t even make sense because they don’t even play the same position.” I didn’t even know that they went and told the coaches this stuff. Apparently the head coach of the program was like, “Oh I’m sure he didn’t mean it like that.” And even, on my varsity team when I was on varsity. I started playing varsity my sophomore year. I kept on getting pulled up to the games and stuff. That year, there was me...there were three Black girls again. One of the other ones was in my grade and the other was a senior or something. It was fine sophomore year. I didn’t expect to be a starter who was only...I was still playing JV, I was getting pulled up. But it was frustrating because I’m not playing on the JV team but how am I getting pulled up to varsity? Like that doesn’t make sense to me. I would try to talk to my coaches about it, but they would say, “oh you’re doing great.” They weren’t giving me anything to improve upon, so why wasn’t I playing? They weren’t giving me any critiques about why I wasn’t playing. They weren’t saying, “oh if you do this, that’s when we can maybe start seeing more playing time for you.” And then, junior year, it was feeling a lot of pressure of if I made any one little error, I would be immediately pulled from the line up. It got to the point where my mom was keeping stats, and my mom was typically one who was pretty hands-off with sports— “That’s your thing. I’ll get you the equipment and to practices and sports, but I’m not going to interfere really.” But my mom started keeping stats because it wasn’t making sense. So and So made eight errors in a game and our coach didn’t say anything to her, didn’t do anything. But if I didn’t fill the ball cleanly, it was an issue. So that was really frustrating, because it felt like my coach was expecting me to mess up rather than, “Oh, Jordyn is going to do well. I’m putting her in to do well” and more like my coach is putting me in so that my parents wouldn’t complain… “oh she messed up one time. That’s why she’s not playing” versus other people he would give them opportunity after opportunity. That just wasn’t the same for me. Senior year, I became-- I started every game except for one game when I was not in town. But even when I was starting every game, like I was the number two batter, I used to do Sac Bunts a lot. If our first batter got on, she would want me to bunt. I remember this one time I didn’t get my bunt down, but I got out on base. I still got on base, I advanced our number one runner. Nothing bad happened, but the next game she put me to the bottom of the line up. She was like, “you didn’t do your job.” Versus there were other girls who would always miss there Sac Bunt, they’d always miss their sign. Nothing would happen to them. Nothing would change in the line up. But I did it one time… Even our lead-up batter...she was not hitting well. She would come to me and say, “oh I’m not doing well. I’m doing terrible. Why won’t our coach switch us? I don’t want to be lead-off. I’m not doing well.” Our coach only switched us one time ever, and I did find...like I was doing great at lead-off and I was lead-off for three games. But that fourth game, I didn’t get on like two times, and then she switched it back to me being second

and the other girl number one. It's just like, you give other people so many chances and she didn't do the same for me.

And even, I did great my senior year. Then, after we lost our final game, our athletic director came to our door of [my] and my mom's car after the game and was like, "wow, Jordyn had a great senior year. We really didn't expect that from her." My mom was like, "oh you are so lucky that your dad was not here. Why would they not expect that from you? They didn't ever give you the opportunity in previous years." Their logic doesn't make any sense. I don't drastically change as a player from junior year to senior year, other than my coach gave me more opportunities. Even they told me to become a slapper my freshman year— "you're fast." That's a specific softball hitting term, offense term. Then sophomore year, I only slapped two times total. I got on base one time, and the second time I got out. After I got out one time, they told me to stop slapping completely. Go back to hitting. That's not even-- in terms of baseball, softball statistics, going one for two is not something that is that big of a deal. Batting 300, which is being successful a third of the time, is super really good for softball, baseball stats. Like 300 is where you want to be. Technically that would have been batting 500, so it was just something that I was just like I could never understand what the coaches wanted from me. And I do feel it had something to do with race, because you would see how they treated the other girls on the team, especially varsity junior year...my senior year there was like three of us. And I had grown up playing with one of them and the other I had been playing with since middle school. So we were really close to each other and we would talk about these things, which is frustrating because one of the girls was super fast and our coach wouldn't let her run bases nearly enough as much as some of the other girls. One time, usually our coach will tell us ahead of time so and so is batting. If she gets homebase then you're going to run base for her. She did *not* do that this time, and this girl didn't have her helmet next to her. You usually set up your helmet next to you, like you're ready to go. And coach didn't tell her. When the other girl got on base, coach was like {yelling}, "Why aren't you ready? Where is your stuff?" And the girl was like, "Whaaattt?" Was unaware that she was going to go run the bases and then, our coach just chose someone else to go run instead of this girl. And then she was like, "this is why you don't run, because you're *never* ready!" The girl started crying. And it was the other Black girl on the team. She never really got to play. That was a moment when the other girl, the third one, was like, "Don't ever let her crack." That was just frustrating for the three of us, because one of them was a pitcher. A really good pitcher. In middle school, she was on varsity her freshman year, and she did not like her coach. I'm not sure at all what our coach was saying to her behind the scenes, because I'm not a pitcher. I'm not at the bullpen and stuff, but it was to the point where she *visibly* didn't like our coach. She was really good and our coach was always saying that she was so lazy and that she was saying this girl was lazy and not a good pitcher, even though she had been so good before. Like, ma'am I don't know...I think it might be something with your coaching. And...all three of us are now playing softball in college, like one of the girls...the girl that she never let run bases is, I'm pretty sure the college is DI that she's going to. It was like, wow you had this girl and not

giving her any opportunity. The girl that's a pitcher is playing DI softball, too. And you were giving...I would say that it wasn't the best environment for a coach. More so from that head coach than our assistant coach, but ...our assistant coach everyone liked more than her.

Thompson: Thank you for sharing that. I think that...you so...you put that in words so well, which can be difficult sometimes for myself and other people to put those nuances. How did that perspective and lens-- It seems like, I don't want to put words in your mouth. It seems like it was forced to have a lens to realize there was something about your racial identity that you had no control over. But that would influence how someone would treat you on and off the field.

Johnson: Softball specifically, it really made me want to quit. I really was going to quit. Like my junior year there was a tournament on my birthday and...it was definitely junior year and I wasn't playing at all. And it was so frustrating because we weren't doing well as a team and she wasn't even letting other people get the opportunity to try. In my perspective, when you're not doing well, then sometimes then let's mix it up. You should have confidence in every player that you have, especially a team that you have tryouts for. It's not a team where everyone gets on. You chose us. You obviously have confidence in us, and if you're a coach-- like if you're doing a good job coaching, you should have confidence in all of your players. To be able to put them out there and to have them perform well. I mean it was just frustrating, because we're losing. At least let me play something! Maybe I can help the team. And I told my mom, "I want to leave." I really wanted to leave in the middle and just be done with the program. I wanted to do track because I was doing indoor track and cross country at that point in my off softball season. I wanted to do those sports, because it was more time-specific. If my time is better than hers, there's no way you can say that I'm not beating her. If I'm better than you, you can't say that I'm not beating you, versus softball is a little more subject of why you're putting people in the line up. There are stats, it's a more subjective sport than track and cross country. But I mean, I didn't really think about it that much in high school. Especially when it happened the first time in my sophomore year, I did not put that-- I put that issue aside to maybe I didn't want to acknowledge it. Like, no you didn't say that just because we're both Black. We're both fast! Maybe that's why he said it. I tried to make it a nonracial thing. I'd say in high school it wasn't something that I put together with my race as much as I do retrospectively.

Thompson: That's really interesting. How did your experiences in high school shape your time in college as a collegiate athlete, thus far.You still have one-- two years left.

Johnson: It's wonky, because I'm going abroad during my season.

Well I don't know. In high school, because I had an injury my junior fall, which would have been a year where I was focusing on getting better and going to campus and focus[ing] on college. But I was injured that fall so I didn't get to go to any camps and play a softball season

that fall. The summer before senior year, I was abroad in China. I've been actually, "I'm not going to play in college," my senior year. I'm fine with that, but I've always been the person...if I work hard on the field, if I'm there before practice starts, if I'm there after practice, no coach can deny me a spot on the team. Showing that I'm working hard and my performance showing that I'm one of the best, I felt like that's something a coach can't hold me back from that.

I'd say that the college experience has been interesting, because I sent an email to my softball coach at Midd. I just listed my stats and I had a highlight reel because our high school coach filmed our...senior year, so I had highlights from senior year. I just sent her my stats and they were really good stats. She just automatically [said], "Oh, you're on the team." So I was just on the team at Midd, but I didn't know the coach beforehand. I feel that's something that typically impacts people's softball team...college...softball team selection. Like how the coach is. I'm also a slapper and our coach doesn't actively recruit slappers, because she said doesn't think most slappers she sees are fast enough to compete at this level. She says, "well you are," which is why she lets me continue to slap. The college experience has been interesting because my coach doesn't actively recruit slappers. To some degree, because she has never trained a slapper, she doesn't really know how to critique my technique because it's something that she's never had before, nor is it actively seeked out. It's kind of interesting. I know that I'm going to get some slapping lessons back at home. I feel like I've tried to change my technique on my own, which is something I feel like-- I was doing great senior year and I tried to change it up, and now I changed it in a way that was better. I feel like some of the things that I do was trying to change things that already worked, trying to appeal to my coach even though it seemed like something I couldn't appeal to since she wouldn't give me critiques on what I was doing. It was more like, oh if you're getting more bases, then like sure.

Thompson: Can you share more about your experience, the social aspect of being on the softball team. It's a relatively small team, compared to football where you have 80+ people. I'm curious to know about what is the culture on your team?

Johnson: Our team is usually really close knit. I think this year we're going to have over twenty people on the team. But definitely my freshman year, we definitely had less than twenty people. It's a team that's really small. I'd say that I was an outlier in the aspect of having a lot of friends outside of the team freshman year. I didn't know who on the team necessarily to go to and be like, "let's be friends!" I didn't know who was on our team until we had our first team meeting. I knew from our group chat, but I didn't have any necessary faces to these names that I would go to and be like, "oh we play softball, let's be friends!" I just made friends with people on my hall, and I didn't have any softball players in my hall. So, I would say that the first year, I would become friends with non-athletes at all. I would become friends with people who were non-athlete people, people who are not athletes at all. And for softball, it is expected that you go to like... we have team parties where it's just the softball team, like no one outside of the team. And

it's expected that you go to all of those. I would be like, especially when we started all of our practices and stuff, I would be like, " I see you guys all the time, but I don't see my friends outside of softball as much as I see you y'all at practice and lift." The weekend is the time that I get to hang out with other people. I would say that it caused a ridge for me on the softball team in the beginning, especially freshman fall. People would assume that I didn't like them because I wasn't going to functions, but I'm like, it's not about y'all. It's about I have other friends, too, that I want to hang out with. And it was like, oh you should come to this function because you already missed two and if you miss this one, the team is really going to be convinced that you don't even want to be a part of [it]. I was like it's not about y'all at all. I like hanging out with you and I also want to hang out with my other friends. I get that it takes time if I really want to be a close-knit team, I've got to spend time with them. But I'm already spend time with you guys after softball practice. We usually always get dinner together, so that's a time I'm still spending time with you guys and getting to know you guys. And then, in the regular week, we'd have senior-freshman lunches. That's another time where I'm just hanging out with the teammates. Even if it's a non-softball time, if you see softball people in the dining hall, it's expected that you sit with them. Freshman year fall, people were just assuming I didn't like them because I didn't spend all my free time with them. We had study parties and I didn't necessarily go. One reason is that the joke is that you don't really do a lot of work at these study parties. You just chat and stuff. The one study party that I went to—nah, I went to two my freshman year—they were watching a movie. And then this year, they were talking, "oh, Jordyn, you were at that movie." I was doing my homework; I was not paying attention to the movie. I was not paying attention at all. I was eating my Sabai and doing my homework, because you guys said it was a homework party.

So freshman year-- I would say freshman Spring...J-Term was a little rough, too, because I was in Chinese and that is a really intensive J-Term course. I didn't have that free time that people had, and for softball, we had to work [the] hockey concession stand. We helped out with track meets, and those are on the weekends, so that takes up my weekends from the morning until mid-past twelve o'clock. I would be tired. I don't want to hang out with anyone in particular. I had Chinese homework I had to do. But spring...oh, well softball season was picking up, so of course I was spending more time with them. We were rarely doing anything at all on the weekends because [the] season was coming up. And then COVID happened so we just went home. But I would say freshman year as a whole, it was a lot of people assuming I didn't like them because I was participating in the team atmosphere in a way that was typical of previous years. I would say that even the class above me, they're all friends with each other. My class, we're fine now. I would say sophomore fall was when I got way more close with my class. We'd go to Dunmore and stuff like that. Because with COVID, you can only hang out with so many people and the softball team was considered a bubble of sorts. I'd say sophomore year I got way more closer to them. I'd say overall, the softball team I feel like it can have a thing with recruitment...It's there in a similar way to a lot of the girls can be quieter upon meeting them, and they normally

socialize amongst themselves rather than spreading out. We have a couple of people who I'd say have a good group of friends outside of softball, but a running joke on the team is, "I don't need close contacts." My close contacts were my softball teammates.

Yeah that's a pretty close group. We don't really socialize with other teams, but between the year older than me and my year, we're changing that. We're going to change it up, because we're going to be...we've been strategizing...we have connections with these teams and these teams! We want-- I feel like my year and the year older than me, we want to connect with other sports teams on campus. But historically the softball team hasn't done that. They've been a pretty isolated group to a degree.

Thompson: I'm kind of debating on which way I want to pull the conversation. I think both ways will be touched on eventually. I'm going to throw out both questions and whichever one you answer will work. How does that sound?

In my conversations with the founders of Student-Athletes of Color (I've had the opportunity to speak with two of the three) Jourdon and Sebastian—haven't yet with Chellsa, yet—have both discussed one, real world events the 2016 Presidential election in the United States was a catalyst for SAOC to be formed. That was a huge event that Sebastian talked about. And then, this past year Jourdon was discussing how George Floyd's murder was another real world event and catalyst—I don't even like calling it an event because that sounds like...I don't know—for a resurgence of SAOC. Both of them emphasized the fact that neither of them are on the same team, were on the same team now that they graduated, so I'm curious to know: one, if you do have support and relationships outside of the softball team that are varsity athletes or just athletes. Doesn't have to be varsity. How has that played a role in shaping your college experience at Middlebury?

Johnson: Freshman year, I can't think. I don't think I heard much about SAOC freshman year. I had BSu...I didn't get to attend as much because my Improv time was at the same time as BSU. But then sophomore year, I started going to SAOC...oh because of the *Leaning into Discomfort*. So I had a one-on-one talk with Ellie for *Leaning into Discomfort* and I had another one-on-one talk with Jourdon, Jourdon Delerme-Brown, so that started a relationship with both of them Both BIPOC student-athletes and then when the campus stuff...when we went back to campus, I went to more SAOC events. I would say that one of the main support outside of softball were Ellie and Jourdon. Yeah and some other athletes. And also, we have...freshman spring, we got Kate. This girl on the softball team who is BIPOC and Sugeidy, who was there freshman fall. Through freshman year I would say that we were not as close as we are now. Me and Kate and Sugeidy are closer now, and they are members who attended SAOC meetings. But yeah, I would say Jourdon and Ellie are people I'm closest to from SAOC. But in general...wait {laughs} what's this about. In terms of having those connections?

I feel like everything changed after George Floyd in a way that my sophomore year would have been really different if that didn't happen. Because freshman year, I had moments about being Black on that campus. I remember I cried outside of my Econ class one time because I was late. I was telling my friend that I was with, that I was crying with because we were both late. He's a white guy and he was like, "what are you upset about?" Because I am really fulfilling a stereotype. I'm being a late Black girl, and I was the only Black woman in that class. I felt pressured in that space, especially econ. Everyone on our campus talks about these "econ bros." I felt like I couldn't ask any questions in class. I feel like I'd be dumb. Even that person I was with, he had previous experience with econ in high school. I didn't take an econ course in high school. Everything I was learning was new. Everyone said these econ courses were easy, which means if they're so easy I shouldn't have any issues. I shouldn't be confused about anything. I restricted myself from asking questions because I didn't want to be seen as a "dumb Black person" in this class. How did they get to Midd? Must be affirmative action. So I had those feelings freshman year sometimes. My Improv group is all BIPOC people, well it's majority BIPOC people. So that was a space that I could talk about that stuff. My Improve teammate people could understand about those things.

But after George Floyd, it made me reflect. You'd see a lot of things on social media and see who's participating in it and who's not. And I honestly have been more recently reflecting on where is the place of the coach? I was honestly thinking in high school, would my coach have said anything about X, Y, and Z? Well high school is different. I get to go home and have my parents to do these things. But at college, I would say that coaches have a greater responsibility. Like, my coach drove me to the emergency room my freshman spring, because I was so sick. The softball team was like, "girl you need to go to the emergency room." It turned out that I have bronchitis. It wasn't like a teammate, it wasn't one of my friends, it was my coach. She acknowledges that difference in responsibility. If I was really sick in high school, my coach is going to send me home to my parents. She's not going to send me there personally to the ER. I've been thinking about where the responsibility of the coach [is]. It also makes me acknowledge what my coach has previously spoken out about before. Before George Floyd, she'd send us information about the GreenDot. Those different situations. We had mental health week and one of our teammates is on top of that. There'd be resources for mental health. We'll we're doing advocacy for LGBTQ+. If we're talking about mental health, sexual assault. I feel like then you have set a precedent for talking about social issues. And Black Lives Matter and being a BIPOC on a predominantly white campus fall within those things. Also, having other people who I'm friends with on other varsity sports allows you to see what other varsity coaches are willing to take on in comparison. The joke in SAOC has been, "oh I want to be on the football team. Sounds like I can be my full self and it's acknowledged by my coaches and teammates about different things I encounter." I'd say even on the softball team, my teammates are more so aware and even in classes, when we talk about courses I have teammates who are

really involved in the Black Study courses that we have at Middlebury. They're more aware about social issues, I'd say, than my coach sometimes. I really like SAOC because it does allow me to meet other athletes in general at Middlebury. It's nice to meet other athletes in general from other teams. In high school, I knew other athletes. Of course I've known them since I was little and know what sports they play. But it's really nice because sometimes at Middlebury my friends who don't do sports and are not involved really in other extracurriculars, they'll be like, "oh my gosh I have so much work." Ma'am, I'm confused how you don't have time to do the work, because I have time to do the work and I'm busy. It's really the physical exhaustion that can come from sports and have to bounce back and do that mental homework and stuff. It's bee nice to goof off with other people, and I know some of the funniest things that have happened in SAOC, even on our leadership, I've gotten closer to other student-athletes. I'm excited for our leadership to be in-person on campus. I know I'm excited for the fall and getting to know more student-athletes of color. I think it's been a very important thing for me because I've heard people explicitly say, "Student-Athletes of Color is for Black students." No, it's not called-- It's not Black Student-Athletes. It's called Student-Athletes of Color. If you identify as a person of color, you can come. You don't have to be Black people.

Thompson: That's so interesting. I'm sorry it's really weird to hear someone talk about you.

I would love to hear your perspective on the College's—not the College's, sorry, the Department's work—on addressing diversity, equity and inclusion. Where do you see, right now, where the department is at? And, where your team is at?

Johnson: I'd say, I'm excited for the DEI committees on each team. That's one of the things I proposed to the DEI Committee as a member of SAOC, and I know it's happening to a certain degree because my-- our captains reached out. Well the captains know that I'm on leadership for SAOC, so the captains reached out to me, "oh we have to do these DEI committees." So they're being told this information, the captains. Someone else told them this information because I didn't. I guess the DEI Committee is actually following through and doing that. I don't even know some of the things the Department is doing, because it's been a couple of months since I looked at our M+ plan and stuff. I've forgotten some of the things that we're doing. I think what's been on my mind is the recruitment process, specifically for softball and my older brother coaches at Washington and Lee so I know some of the recruitment things that he does. I'd say that's one of the things that I want to be seeing more in the opportunities to diversify athletics. What the recruitment process looks like. Talking to my other teammates in my year about how they were recruited to Middlebury, it was through camps. And, that was either attending camps at Middlebury or attending camps that weren't close to them. They had to travel. And also they are all over $500 camps. I know that I could pay $500 to play a whole season of tournaments. I could pay $500 to play seven tournaments on a team versus $500 to attend one camp in hopes of being seen by a coach. So I know that's one thing I've been thinking about in terms of

diversifying athletics—how does that happen in other sports? I know that softball has tournaments. Football is a sport that you have camps, but I'd say that the huddle is more widely used at football than in my opinion what I've seen at softball. They have somebody there to record the game. We were lucky in my senior year that my coach started recording our games so we could get critiques on our hitting. That's why I have those tapes from senior year.

And then in terms of athletics, we have the Black Lives Matter flag, but I'm not entirely sure what else is being done that we can see in athletics...M+, it could be something that we see in this upcoming year. But right now, we don't necessarily change. I mean the Department really supports Student-Athletes of Color, which is great because we're at the Department. They should support a whole organization that's based around the athletic department. They address whatever is happening; they release statements, so at least they are acknowledging it. But I know there's frustration from students and there's pushback from administrators in terms of what it looks like for coaches and teams having these conversations around DEI. I know SAOC has discussed whether should this be a plan that they're given that they should follow. I know that it's been a thing of coaches and the athletic department of, "to what degree is this our place?" and discussions should be conducted. We see the football team is the one doing it the most and the best. If they can find time to do it, why can't other teams find time to do it, too? I would say that track is the one that doesn't have an off-season, because my thing in my head in structures is that you can find time in one's off season. I can easily hear the complaint that, "we're here to do our sports. We are in season. We don't have time to focus on this, that, and that." You're going, going, going during [the] season. Things are packed tight. The offseason opportunity. I know for softball we have offseason, we have captains practice. I'm trying to remember how it was, because this fall it was kind of different. I don't remember what happened this fall with softball. That was interesting! Because for so long we weren't able to do any sports stuff at Middlebury. But freshman fall, to what I remember, we had practice every day and we had lifts and things like that. We definitely could have had time to get together like once a week to have those talks versus trying to do a talk during the season when you have practices and games. I feel like it could be a structure that happens in [the] offseason, because you're already focusing...I'd say [the] offseason is when coaches really focus on team culture and sort of things like that. I would say for softball team specifically, I feel like there's certain things that when you come up to the team, there are things that team finds important, such as the Red Dot and LGBTQ+. When I got on that team, it was made clear to me that those things were discussed. So why can't racial issues, racial injustice, that they stand for when they do for other issues?

Thompson: So you have two years left at Middlebury, which is a really short amount of time. It's a short-long timeframe if you think about it. Where would you like to see Middlebury in two years from now? A smaller, maybe more tangible question would be, where would you like to see the Department in two years from now?

Johnson: Two years from now...hmmm...where would I like to see the Department? That's a good question. The thing is people always say change takes time and you can't expect things to happen in two years. I'd say...I think it would be really cool if there was not one team in our school that was all white. I think that would be crazy, because we still have teams where not one single person is a person of color. I know that I had to have a call with a recruit for one of the teams at Midd, because they didn't have a person of color so they reached out to a different team in the Department. So I think that would be cool, in general, if there wasn't one team that wasn't white. I wouldn't believe it if someone said, "we just can't find a nonwhite person to play this sport." I believe that would have to be a straight up lie, because there is definitely non-- I'm not even going to say Black people. I know that there are nonwhite people who play every sport we have to offer at Middlebury College. I feel like it's an ask of where are you recruiting? I know that so far on the Middlebury softball Instagram, it's been documented like, "oh, come see Middlebury softball at this camp...come to Middlebury softball's camp." Things like that. I mean she could be going to tournaments and I just don't know. But it's just like, I think if you're only focused on people going to camps in the Pennsylvania-New England area, going to a couple of camps out west and your going to camps in majority-white areas that are expensive, I don't think you should be surprised that you get a majority-white incoming class of wealthy people. That's where you're recruiting from. Versus I know I've been playing softball-- I've been playing travel ball since I was thirteen. I've had some travel softball teams. Travel softball teams can be a thousand of dollars to be on . I know that I've been on teams where I only have to pay only $300 for an entire season, and I've gone to tournaments in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, [and] Florida. It's like in the South in general, specifically Black people. There's more Black people in the South. In my area, we have more diversity than Middlebury College in Vermont. I'd say that if coaches started not just attending expensive camps or not specifically really white areas, they could find other races that play that sport and have the academic rigor to excel at Middlebury.

I think the next aspect is SAOC, we need to keep growing so there is that support system for when they come. If student-athletes of color come and they don't have support, they'll just leave. They're not going to stay. People transfer from Middlebury all the time. We don't have a *huge* amount of transfers, but you can go to school. They don't have to stay once they're coming. Or if they don't have the support, they might do really poorly. Those that do might be like, "Oh if I don't perform well, my coach isn't going to-- not recruit from my area." I feel there's that risk that if you don't have that support system and you bring student-athletes of color in, and you're like, "well they're doing bad." This is why we don't recruit student-athletes of color, because we bring them in and they do poorly. Well, are they doing poorly because they don't have the support that is necessary at Middlebury College, or are they doing poorly because you recruit someone who isn't great at the sport? Or you recruited someone who didn't have the academic ability to excel at Middlebury? I'd say that's a small thing, it's something that could feasibly happen: no all-white sports teams at Middlebury.

I mean if hockey and squash aren't all white, we can do that.

Thompson: I love that. It's also, I agree, a very tangible and...easy thing to do. Emphasis...like bold, highlight, underscore "easy." It's not that difficult in this day and age to find..

Johnson: I mean you look at the Olympics right now, the U.S. Olympic team… you can't just say, "oh we just can't find good athletes that--" *No*. You're just not looking for them.

Thompson: You mention a lot about how SAOC has been a safe space in the literal sense of you guys meeting on a weekly basis, and also in an abstract of just knowing everyone in that group has your back, whatever the situation might be. And this past year, this past spring semester, you became a part of the SAOC leadership when it expanded to more than just two people. Even within this one semester, you've advocated for yourself to have an even larger role to take on mor leadership within SAOC...to be able to-- where did that energy come from to want to do more? Use your voice more.

Johnson: I think that so far from my experience with SAOC, George Floyd's murder was something that, it was a catalyst for some degree to reinvigorate Student-Athletes of Color's presence on campus. So I would say this past year its focus has been on what changes we want to see in the athletic department. It's more been a group for advocacy for racial injustice at Middlebury and how we want to combat that. The reason for expanding the leadership with this events committee is for SAOC to be more of a community of just being yourself and have fun. Whereas, at Middlebury, I'd say a good bit of student-athletes feel like they can't just be-- not just student-athletes of color but a good bit of people of color at Middlebury feel like they can't be their full selves at Middlebury. That expands to student-athletes of color, even in their sports space. There are people who are the only person of color on their entire team. They might feel like they can't be their full self in fear of judgement that something in their culture that's not something the people on their team are knowledgeable about that. I don't want to have to educate them on something that I just do because it's a part of my culture. I want SAOC to be more of a social space for people to chill out. You know if something is happening on your team, that you might not necessarily go to one of the leaders of SAOC, you might just go to one of your friends who you met at SAOC. That's why one of my favorite events that we do is the cooking thing. We did not even talk about, "oh did something happen on your team this week? Did something happen on your team that you want to bring up to your coach? Oh, something addressed or something address poorly." It was just us goofing off, being scared that we were going to make something explode. Being goofy and just hanging out as friends. It didn't have anything to do with what advocacy we need to take up with the athletic department after they failed to do X, Y, or Z. That's what I want to see more of for Student-Athletes of Color is more of social aspect of

us just hanging out. That's how you know you have that support system. I know that can reach out to one of my teammates who attends Student-Athletes of Color because she attends Student-Athletes of Color, where we've had more difficult conversations. I also know that we just goof off at the events and also have those difficult conversations. I know for me that's what I want out of Student-Athletes of Color. I know that I'm already trying to plan for some of those events in the fall. I want us to have some stuff of us just purely having fun. Getting exposed to different things. Some people-- it's not even about our student-athletes of color, some people of color on our campus, too, expose them to experiences that they may not be able to be exposed to because of the exclusivity of spaces.

Thompson: I love that perspective, and I am looking forward to seeing how you shape SAOC into that vision. I think it will be amazing. The people that get to experience those events on campus are going to be so grateful for it.

Johnson: I want to do a swimming event, but only for people of color. Because I know one thing that's embarrassing...I got Ellie to teach me-- I could swim underwater and stuff, but there's an aspect of there's a stereotype that Black people can't swim. If I were to sign up for a normal swim class at Midd, I feel like, "dang, yeah I can't swim *and* I'm Black." Am I really fulfilling the stereotype versus it being all people of color, it wouldn't feel as much judgement. I know my older brother, he had to attend swim lessons at his school because it's mandatory. But it was like aha, of course you can't swim that type of energy. I feel like it would be a more comfortable space of, "yeah I can't swim but I'd like to learn." We have BIPOC people on the swim team that could help teach people how to swim. It could be a nonwhite space. I feel like in my experience personally and from other BIPOC people, it can be embarrassing to admit something like that. Because that is something that is expect and I don't want to fill stereotypes.

Thompson: I love that, and I believe that the president of SAOC would be more than willing to put that on. Would be very energized to have that. That's not me...I *am* very energized to have that. That's not what I meant! I'm just stepping down [from my role of president].

I can't think of any other questions. I already know that we could be on this call forever. Jordyn, you and I talk personally outside of this, but I personally am so amazed. You are opening my mind to so many different things. I will always see you as a role model, a mentor.

Johnson: I'm younger than you!

Thompson: You don't have to be older to be a mentor and role model. But I definitely do look up to you personally and in our work together as partners in our leadership with SAOC. I'm very thankful for your time today and I cannot wait to see what you do and the work—I don't want to say work because I don't want to put that weight on your shoulders—beyond excited for you,

what these next two years hold for you and for you to take charge for whatever is in your life that you want to do.

Thank you so much for your time, I will look forward to seeing all these amazing events and seeing how you positively influence on campus and much farther beyond that.